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SUBJECT: MINIMIZING ELECTION FRAUD

REF: A. Kabul 1140

[B](#). Kabul 1148

[C](#). Kabul 1902

[D](#). Kabul 1848

[1](#). (U) Summary. Candidates, Afghans and the international community have ongoing concerns that fraud - actual or perceived - will undermine the integrity of election results. They are concerned about voter registration irregularities, the potential for 'ballot stuffing,' and tampering with results. The Independent Election Commission (IEC), the UN, the international community, and Afghan government institutions have designed election procedures and taken other steps to reduce fraud and increase confidence in the election process. More can still be done. Minimizing fraud will require sound election procedures, effective management, strong electoral institutions and robust election observation. End Summary.

Registration Irregularities

[2](#). (U) The IEC reported a total of around 17 million registered voters, with 12.5 million registered for the 2004/2005 elections and 4.5 million for the 2009 elections. Both voter registrations were marred with irregularities. Observer groups reported fraud and procedural flaws in the last registration process, including: registration of voters under 18; multiple registrations; distribution of blank registration forms and proxy registration of women by male relatives. These registration abuses have the potential to alter the results of the election and seriously endanger the credibility of the process. At least one candidate has stated that he/she stands ready to challenge the results of the elections because of the flaws in female voter registration.

[3](#). (U) In some provinces, local IEC officials ignored the physical presence requirement for voter registration and issued voter ID cards for women whose male family members registered them in absentia. Provinces where this practice was widespread recorded women's registration rates significantly higher than the national average of 30 to 40 percent. For instance, eight Provinces - Daikundi, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Kapisa, Laghman, Paktika and Panjsher - showed average female registrants close to 50 percent. Five other provinces showed averages of more than 50 percent: Badghis (54 percent), Paktia (64 percent), Khost (67 percent), Logar (67 percent), and Nuristan (71 percent).

[4](#). (U) Sound election procedures, including the use of indelible ink to mark the finger of voters, and the integrity of election officials, observers and agents can help prevent these additional registration cards from becoming fraudulent votes and limit proxy voting.

Election Day

[5](#). (U) Across Afghanistan, polls will open on August 20 at 7:00 AM. After a security check, at the door of each polling station an Identification Officer will check each voter's registration card and

fingers to confirm they have not yet voted. Once confirmed, the voter will move to another IEC official who will check that the card's information matches with the individual, ink the voter's finger, punch the card with a triangular hole to prevent reuse in this election, and record the name and card number in a voter registry. The voter will then move to the ballot paper issuer who stamps two ballots in the back - one presidential and one provincial - and hands them over to the voter. Stamping the back of the ballot provides an additional anti-fraud measure to prevent fake ballots from entering the system. The voter then proceeds to the voting screen, marks each ballot with a pen and walks to the two ballot boxes to deposit them in the appropriate box. The ballots and boxes are color coded - green for presidential candidate, brown for provincial council candidates.

¶6. (U) To prevent one person from voting multiple times, it is especially important that the ink is high quality and procedures for applying it make it very difficult to remove. The IEC has dispatched two experts to test the ink in China and they will hand carry additional samples to be tested at Kabul University.

¶7. (U) When voting ends, polling station staff will reconcile ballots and tally results at the polling station. The tally report has one original and four copies. The original tally report is put in a tamper evident, numbered bag for transfer to the national tally center in Kabul; one copy is posted at the polling station, two are given to candidates agents and one is put in the ballot box. The manager will then reseal the ballot box. The manager and security forces will accompany the sealed ballot box to the provincial capital.

¶8. (U) Opportunities for 'ballot stuffing', invalidating ballots and altering results reports will be limited by the presence of observers and party agents. An efficient counting process ensures that observers and agents are able to remain until the process is

KABUL 00002019 002 OF 003

complete to help prevent fraud. To that end, the U.S. Interagency Election Team has proposed to UNDP a more secure and streamlined procedure for reconciling, classifying and counting ballots. Since party agents will also receive copies of tally reports, election or security officials will be deterred from changing tally reports as they are transferred from the polling station to Kabul.

¶9. (U) Additional procedural changes would further increase the integrity of the process by reducing the risk of final results being modified after the counting operation is complete. We have proposed to UNDP to seal the tally reports with a sticky, transparent tape that would make it more difficult if not impossible to modify the results.

Tally Center

¶10. (U) Well-planned procedures and operations at the Tally Center in Kabul are also critical for fraud prevention. The IEC has not yet completed procedures or operations plans for the Tally Center and the Interagency Election Team stands ready to assist in reviewing and working with UNDP and IEC to make sure that reliable anti-fraud measures are put in place. The Interagency Election Team has already advised UNDP on operational structure and procedures regarding the Tally Center.

Sound Procedures and Effective Management

¶11. (U) In addition to designing good procedures, effective recruitment, training and management of poll workers is important for fraud prevention. The IEC, with the support of IFES, will train close to 170,000 workers using a training 'cascade' format. On July 18, the training of 10 regional and 160 provincial trainers started. This phase of the training will last until July 25 and be followed by the training of the 3,046 District Field coordinators until August 6. From August 12 until August 18, 160,000 poll workers and managers will be trained to complete the training process. In addition, the MOI will separately train 14,000 female searchers to staff half of the polling stations which are devoted to women voters. Recruitment of women poll workers is difficult.

Internal IEC Audit

¶12. (U) The Interagency Election Team is supporting the IEC in development and implementation of plans for a comprehensive audit process aimed at limiting potential fraud, from bogus registration cards and polling staff collusion. On Election Day, IEC auditors would proactively sample and check ballot boxes once they arrive at provincial centers, after having been counted, especially in areas deemed highly vulnerable to fraud. The IEC could then choose to void results of these locations if the evidence warrants it. Interagency Election Support Team staff are working on procedures for the audit with the head of the IEC Secretariat Procedures Department and with UNDP-ELECT.

¶13. (U) In recognition that public knowledge of the audit process would dissuade potential fraud, Post will help the IEC develop a public information campaign targeted at political elites and polling station workers. This process was used with some success in Iraq.

Observation -----

¶14. (U) The presence of observers and political agents in polling stations is an integral part of fraud prevention efforts. Plans for a significant international and domestic observation presence are coming together. Last week, the European Union officially launched its observer mission to the Afghan elections, which will deploy 86 observers around Afghanistan, including 50 short-term observers, down slightly from earlier figures. Post is negotiating grants with four implementers that would put over 250 long-term and short-term observers into the field.

¶15. (U) The domestic observer organization FEFA plans to deploy 400 Afghan long-term observers and 7600 Afghan short-term observers which they hope will cover 65 percent of polling stations. To achieve geographic distribution, we will rely in some cases on military support, including PRT support, and we are making these arrangements through ISAF. Ref C provides further information on observation plans.

Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) -----

¶16. (U) The ECC is also a key safeguard against fraud. The ECC is an independent Afghan body established under Article 52 of the Electoral Law to adjudicate all challenges and complaints related to the electoral process. The ECC has its headquarters in Kabul and

KABUL 00002019 003 OF 003

will be represented in each province of Afghanistan by the Provincial Election Complaints Commissions (PCCs). Each PCC consists of three provincial Commissioners and one support officer. Eight of the provincial offices will have additional legal and investigative capacity to assist the provincial offices when required. The ECC is separate from, and independent of, the IEC. Its provincial office establishment is behind schedule and we are working with the ECC to overcome problems delaying the effort.

¶17. (U) In a press conference on June 21, ECC Chairman Grant Kippen announced that a total of 148 complaints have been received. Forty six relate to the Presidential Race. Common themes in these complaints are: accusations of past criminal activity by the candidates; conflict of interest (public official improperly campaigning for a candidate; and misuse of state resources. Of the 148 complaints, the ECC has adjudicated over 40, which resulted in 2 Provincial Council candidates being disqualified (one from Nimroz, one from Kunan). Also, one individual was fined for attacking the dignity of a presidential candidate on a broadcast TV program. Other decisions dismissed cases for lack of evidence, or for falling outside of ECC jurisdiction. The ECC referred three cases to the attorney general for investigation. A summary of the complaints shows that most complaints were filed in Kabul Province (38). Separately, the ECC received 36 complaints directly. Badakhshan is third with 11 total complaints. Takhar has seven. Nangahar and Kunar have six. Kunar has four. Nine provinces had zero complaints, including Wardak, Paktiya, Paktika, Laghman, Nuristan,

Badghis, Zabul, Panjshir, and Daikundi.

¶18. During a visit to the ECC by Ambassador Carney on July 15, Kippen said he Expected the pace of investigations to be much greater after August 20 than before, and said ECC has requested additional funding from the donor community in Kabul to provide support for a stepped-up pace of investigative trips from Kabul.

¶19. (U) Kippen said IFES will provide six election experts to the ECC who will look at strengthening ECC investigative capabilities. Amb. Carney offered to look into providing USAID Air flights if the ECC needs to get to a location quickly in order to investigate a significant complaint and the ECC cannot arrange transportation itself. Ref D provides additional information.

EIKENBERRY